



Office of the Economic Development Administrator
City of New Haven
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TESTIMONY OF HELEN ROSENBERG
Economic Development Officer
CITY OF NEW HAVEN
OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
Before the
COMMERCE COMMITTEE
March 8, 2011

Re: Raised Bill No. 6526: An Act Concerning Brownfield Remediation and Development as an Economic Driver

The City of New Haven would like to express support for Section 17. of Raised Bill 6526, which will help expedite brownfields redevelopment in the city and throughout Connecticut, but with critical deletions to subsection 17(b) of the Bill, removing restrictions on the number and types of brownfields that can take advantage of the program.

The City of New Haven has been working successfully since the mid-1990's to address the need to cleanup and redevelop brownfields of all sizes throughout the city. These efforts included pursuing legislative changes through coordination of the Coalition for Clean Sites, resulting in bills passed in 1996 and 1998 which created Licensed Environmental Professionals, Covenants Not to Sue, Environmental Land Use Restrictions, expanded municipal site access powers and Remediation Standard Regulations revisions.

Despite the contributions these measures have made toward the redevelopment of contaminated sites, brownfields have become a growing problem in the city as globalization and economic change have taken their toll. A few years ago over 400 people in the city were employed in about 500,000 square feet of active industrial space on 26 acres that have since been vacated as plants have shut down. As public funding has all but disappeared, the City must rely on private investors to take on the environmental challenges these properties pose.

Prospective developers continue to be intimidated by the additional bureaucratic requirements and delays associated with the Transfer Act, which most of the city's brownfields fall under, as well as uncertainties regarding liabilities for conditions on these sites. Provisions in An Act Concerning Brownfield Remediation and Development as an Economic Driver, outlined in Section 17 of the bill, would expedite brownfield cleanup in the state and be of particular benefit to old, industrial cities such as New Haven. It would provide assurances to the developer regarding liability through Department of Environmental Protection issuance of a "Notice of Completion of Remedy and No Further Action Letter" and provide developers with a clear and expedited process, avoiding costly and unreasonable delays which can frustrate site redevelopment, reuse and job creation.

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The City supports Section 17, but strongly recommends eliminating the conditions inserted in subsection (b) as irrelevant and potentially detrimental to the goal of timely brownfields redevelopment. These conditions are the limitation of participation in the program to 20 properties at any one time and the addition of social and economic criteria to eligibility determination for it. They would undoubtedly result in the delay of remediation, increased redeveloper costs for professional services and would add a level of political activity to what should ideally be a straightforward real estate and environmental cleanup effort.

Thank you.